Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia National Early Childhood Development and Education Policy Framework

2022/23
Addis Ababa

Foreword

Message from the Ministry of Education

Investing in early childhood development and education plays a significant role in establishing sustainable economic development and has a huge social payoff. This investment should place a child's holistic development at the centre of its efforts. A holistic approach to early childhood development interventions focuses on children's physical, personal, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being, as well as cognitive aspects of learning. This happens when all concerned bodies including government, civil societies, donors, parents, and communities work collaboratively. These efforts will contribute to breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty and laying the foundations for prosperity.

Cognizant of the pivotal role of education in coordinating and creating awareness of the implementation of holistic child development, the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (EFDR) has given due importance to the Early Childhood Development and Education. Children's holistic development will hugely contribute to the human resource development of the country. This is why the government is prioritising investment in the young, the human capital for sustainable development of the future. To this effect all sector ministries working with children must work together in a coordinated manner.

The Government of Ethiopia is committed to supporting and providing opportunities to vulnerable children to improve health, early learning and social adjustment.
The Ministry of Education, one of the key stakeholders in holistic child development, has made strong efforts to coordinate stakeholders to build better environments and redress the current situation.

As a result, this revised policy framework aspires to a coordinated effort and purposeful interventions to make every young citizen a future productive member of the workforce. The Ministry of Education envisages that this policy framework will provide a co-ordination mechanism that explicitly defines the role of all stakeholders (parents, communities, government ministries and departments, development partners, and other stakeholders) in the provision of Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) services to improve early learning.

It is my wish that implementation of this policy framework will ensure enhanced financing, access, quality, equity and efficient coordination and management of Early Childhood Development and Education services including pre-primary education. I, therefore, urge all stakeholders to contribute their level best and act accordingly for the successful implementation of this policy framework.

Prof. Birhanu Nega
Minister, Ministry of Education

Message from the Ministry of Health (MoH)

The Government of Ethiopia recognizes that early childhood is an important period of development that requires multifaceted investment. Providing children with care and protection in early childhood, the first seven years of life and particularly the first three years, is crucial to ensuring the healthy development of children and thereby realizing their full potential later in life. Failure to provide health care, adequate nutrition, protection, responsive care, early stimulation, and early learning opportunities not only prevents children from becoming productive citizens in the future, but also reduces their ability to lead a better life.

Malnutrition, toxic stress, lack of nurturing care and brain stimulation during the early years impair brain development and thus children's potential to learn. This precludes children from reaching their full potential and becoming productive adults.

Various studies show that working on early childhood development, that is, maintaining the health of children and helping them reach the highest levels of physical, mental, social, and emotional development, not only lays the foundation to their future success but also contributes to national stability and sustainable socio-economic development. As such, implementing programs targeting children during the early years is a great investment in human capital.

The Early Childhood Development and Education Policy Framework is a comprehensive framework, which recapitulates programs charting services for children and their parents or caregivers from infancy to seven years of age. Successful implementation of these programs requires the participation and collaboration of various sectors.

This policy framework was developed in a consultation process, and it will serve as the foundation for establishing comprehensive, practical, and effective early childhood care and education practices. The implementation of this policy will be a critical step forward for the children of our country to have a better, wiser, and healthier start in life. Besides, it will create an environment that will enable children to develop as responsible and productive citizens.

Providing children with optimum nutrition, healthcare, protection, responsive care, and early stimulation services during early childhood will offer significant social and economic benefits. The effectiveness of the investment relies on collaboration between Education, Health, Women and Children, and other social sectors, and other stakeholders at all levels.

This policy framework stipulates the role of various stakeholders in the provision of early childhood development services. It details the responsibilities of parents and caregivers, the community, government, development partners, and other stakeholders.

The Government of Ethiopia desires to implement the policy efficiently and effectively to ensure equitable access to early childhood care and education services to all Ethiopian children. In doing so, the government envisages that the care and education of young children take precedence in our country's development agenda.

Lia Tadesse (Dr.)
Minister, Ministry of Health

Message from the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA)

Children are the most precious resource of current and future generations of any society. They need to be provided with all the necessary services to improve their well-being and ensure their comprehensive and complete development.

Investment in health, nutrition, education, and the physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development of children with a comprehensive life-cycle approach beginning in early childhood is critical and has unparalleled returns in human capital.

Studies indicate that implementing joined-up social protection programs that complement each other through the life-cycle approach reduce poverty and vulnerability and help to break intergenerational cycles of poverty.

The National Social Protection Policy of Ethiopia was endorsed in 2014 to address the needs of poor and vulnerable citizens through coordinated interventions to help those who are below the poverty line, lift them out of poverty, and assist the vulnerable from falling into poverty and destitution. The policy consists of many child affairs issues that have linkage to the National Early Childhood Development and Education Policy Framework.

With the universal development that our country is achieving, better changes in children's lives are being seen from time to time, but there are still many issues that have not been answered, especially since understanding around responsive child rearing is low. There are many harmful practices being carried out against children; early childhood services that should be provided to children at the developmental level have not been expanded, there is a lack of comfortable and harmonious living environments, a lack of a strong child protection system and other deficiencies, and children in the early childhood are vulnerable to neglect, violence, and are in an unfavourable situation.

Many Women, Children and Social protection programs that help children (such as prenatal and postnatal care, nutrition services and other on-going programs) to access basic social services are part of the National Social Protection interventions. Hence, the Ministry would like to expresses its commitment to working in collaboration with all concerned bodies for the implementation of the National Early Childhood Development and Education Policy Framework to ensure the well-being of Ethiopian children, to increase the skills of families, caregivers, and teachers with better child-rearing methods, to strengthen the role of the community, to create a comfortable and suitable environment, to strengthen the child protection system, to contribute to the good development of children.

I am confident that the expected results can be obtained if all the stakeholders work in coordination and collaboration to implement the National Early Childhood Development and Education Policy Framework.

Ergogie Tesfaye (PhD)
Minister, Ministry of Women and Social Affairs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Foreword ii
Acronyms vii
Preface viii
PART ONE 1
Introduction 1
1. Definition and Significance of Early Childhood 1
1.1. Early Childhood 1
1.2. The Significance of Investing in Early Childhood Development and Education 1
1.3. The Nurturing Care Framework 1
PART TWO 4
2. Policy Framework 4
2.1 Rationale for Policy Framework Revision Imperative 4
2.2 Basic Concepts 4
2.3 Vision 5
2.4 Mission 5
2.5 Goal 5
2.6 Principles 5
2.7 Scope of Implementation 5
PART THREE 6
3. Policy Framework Focus Areas and Implementation Modalities 6
3.1 Health, Nutrition, and Early Stimulation Services (from Pre-birth to 3+ Years) 6
3.1.1. Objectives 6
3.1.2. Implementation Modalities 6
3.2. Early Childhood Education (4–6 Years) 7
3.2.1. Objectives 7
3.2.2. Implementation Modalities 8
3.2.3 Strengthen Children's Rights, Safety and Security 8
3.3.1. Objectives 9
3.3.2. Implementation Modalities 9
3.3 Responsive Care Giving 10
PART FOUR 12
4. Implementation Framework 12
4.1 Strengthen Institutional Capacity 12
4.2 Operational Framework 12

4.3 Source of Finance 12
4.4 Strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning 12
PART FIVE 13
5. Roles and Responsibilities in the Provision of ECDE Services 13
5.1 Stakeholder roles and responsibilities 13
5.1.1. Ministry of Education 13
5.1.2. Ministry of Health 13
5.1.3. Ministry of Women and Social Affairs 14
5.1.4. Parents, Caregivers and Guardians 14
5.2 Partner roles and responsibilities 15
5.2.1. Community 15
5.2.2. Ministry of Finance 15
5.2.3. Justice Bodies 15
5.2.4. Ministry of Culture and Tourism 16
5.2.5. Mass Media 16
5.2.6. Ministry of Agriculture 16
5.2.7. Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy 16
5.2.8. Ministry of Peace 16
5.2.9. Ministry of Urban Development and Housing 17
5.2.10. Higher Education, Training and Research Institutions 17
5.2.11. Religious Institutions 17
5.2.12. Development Partners 17
5.2.13. Non-Governmental Civic Associations 17
5.2.14. Private ECDE Service Providers 17
5.2.15. Private Sector 18

Acronyms

ACRWC: African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)

ASRP: Accelerated School Readiness Program

CHEP: Community Health Extension Programs

CSO: Civil Society Organizations

ECCE: Early Childhood Care and Education

ECD: Early Childhood Development

ECDE: Early Childhood Development and Education

EDHS: Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey

ESAA: Education Statistics Annual Abstract

FBO: Faith Based Organisation

HEP: Health Extension Program

HEW: Health Extension Worker

CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child

IECD: Integrated Early Childhood Development

INGO: International Non-Governmental Organizations

ISRP: Informal School Readiness Program

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

MHPSS: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

MoE: Ministry of Education

MoH: Ministry of Health

MoWSA: Ministry of Women and Social Affairs

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

WB: World Bank

Preface

Early childhood is a critical stage of human development. Many developmental changes occur at this time, laying the foundation for children's future success. It is believed that Achieving quality early childhood development opportunities and education will need significant investment.

Early childhood captures the period of development from conception to 6 years. Early childhood, and especially the first three years, is a time of rapid physical, intellectual, psychological, social, and emotional development and when the foundations for children's future success are laid.

To reach to their potential, children require a safe and secure environment, quality health services, adequate and balanced nutrition, pre-primary education opportunities, and responsive care. This necessitates the cooperation and organizational work of many sectors and organizational bodies.

Failure to provide services and care jeopardizes children's right to be productive citizens, to a better life, and to contribute to society and the development of their country in general.

Since 2005, Ethiopia has focused on early childhood development and pre-primary education. Various tasks have been completed towards the attainment of early learning, health, and well-being for all children. However, despite relatively encouraging trends over the last ten years, holistic child development has not reached the desired level for a variety of reasons.

For better operationalization and alignment with the global ECD strategic recommendations and the current national documents, the Ministry of Education, Health, Women and Social Affairs, Finance, Agriculture, Culture and Tourism, Water and Energy, Irrigation and Lowlands, Peace, and Justice, Addis Ababa University, World Bank, UNICEF, USAID, World Vision Ethiopia and Save the Children have together, and with consideration to the feedback of senior leadership, revised the policy framework as ECDE.

Education, Health, and Women and Social Affairs sectors will work together to lead the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of this policy framework. Thus, Coordination in all aspects of the framework is needed to promote children's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development. Implementation of the ECDE Policy Framework has the potential to change the lives of all children in Ethiopia.

PART ONE

Introduction

1. Definition and Significance of Early Childhood

1.1. Early Childhood

Early childhood is from pregnancy to 6 years. Early childhood, especially the first three years, is a time of rapid physical, mental, psychological, social, and emotional development. These developments provide the foundations for future success. There are great benefits to be drawn from providing an environment in which children can develop fully into healthy, productive, capable, ethical, and responsible citizens. Therefore, there is a need to focus on work that impacts those in early childhood.

To reach their full potential, children in early childhood need a safe and comfortable environment, appropriate health services, an adequate and balanced diet, opportunities for pre-primary education, and responsive care. To achieve this, different sectors and stakeholders must collaborate and integrate.

1.2. The Significance of Investing in Early Childhood Development and Education

Care and support during early childhood, especially during the first three years from conception, have more impact than during any other stage of development.

Investing in early childhood development and education programs:

a) increases timely identification and support for children with special needs, who are at higher risk, so that they have better opportunities and improved situations.

b) increases access to and participation in pre-primary and primary education.

c) There are great economic benefits to investing in quality programs for early childhood.

d) reducing the cost to family and society of school dropout and repetition rates. Children who are well cared for and healthy are more likely to do better at school.

e) increases job opportunities and standards of living.

f) shapes children ethically, strengthening their capacity as well as the capacity of their family and society.

1.3. The Nurturing Care Framework

The Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development Framework (WHO, 2018) is a globally recognized structure to improve health, food safety and security, responsive care, and support as well as pre-primary education for children. The framework outlines the different programs that should be implemented by parents and caregivers, communities, and service-providing stakeholders “to help children survive and thrive to transform health and human potential”. The framework includes five components. For each component, the situational assessments in different sectors are indicated below.

Health

To effectively implement nurturing care for early childhood development care, it is necessary to ensure the health, including mental health, of children parents and caregivers. Programs and strategies are in place to prevent and treat illness and promote the health of children, parents, and caregivers.

According to mini-EDHS (2019), 73% of pregnant women received prenatal services, 49.8% of pregnant women delivered in health facilities, and 34% received post-natal services. Ethiopia reduced its under-5 child mortality rate ahead of the UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) schedule; however, the newborn mortality rate remains high. As a result, the majority of national child health programs are survival-focused (reducing morbidity and mortality) with little, or no focus given to the thrive agenda or working on its development.

Adequate and Balanced Nutrition

Ethiopia has drafted a national nutrition program, supportive protocols, and guidelines to mitigate the nutrition problems of mothers, children, adolescents, and youth. Productive safety net programs have also been launched in urban and rural areas to ensure food security and emplace a national nutrition system. However, as they are implemented in specific areas, they are not accessible to all.

Mini-EDHS (2019) shows that there is a severe lack of adequate diet for Ethiopian children; about 37% of children below the age of five are stunted. Only 58% of infants who are 6 months old are breastfed. Moreover, challenges such as lack food at household level, a lack of parental time, resources and skills to source and prepare nutritious food, infections, a lack of balanced diet for mothers, and an absence of personal and environmental hygiene further compound the problem.

Safety and Security of Children

Safety and security are essential for a child's holistic development and achieving it requires the integrated efforts of all stakeholders. Activities that promote the safety and security of children in Ethiopia include birth registration, protection of children's rights, (protection from violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect), supply of clean and potable water, environmental protection, and prevention of pollution.

Birth registration has been in place since 2016. However, registration rates are low. For example, only 3% of children born in 2019/20 have been registered. This is a result of institutional systems, procedural barriers, and lack of community awareness of the importance of birth registration.

Child abuse and exploitation in Ethiopia are common, including corporal punishment, neglect, sexual abuse, murder, beggary, and physical exploitation (compelling to work for more hours or beyond their capacity). Such Harmful practices cause long-term physical, social, emotional, and psychological damage and even death.

Children in early childhood are especially vulnerable. Despite efforts to mitigate risks to children, it has become difficult to fulfil their basic needs and sustainably support their development. Moreover, a lack of stakeholder integration has weakened results.

Environment has a great impact on child development. However, places for recreation and play, day care and other services are often unavailable. Schools and other institutions seldom meet the needs of children in early childhood.

Responsive Care Giving

Parents and caregivers play the most important role in fulfilling their children's care needs. Infants use cues and signals to explain what they need, and in responsive caregiving, caregivers respond to those cues appropriately and with affection. This responsive care has positive impacts on the holistic development of the child.

In Ethiopia, awareness of the benefits of responsive caregiving and the associated skills are not widespread. Consequently, many children lack nurturing care in their earliest years, and are less likely to develop to their full potential.

Early Stimulation/Opportunity for Early Learning via Play

Children in early childhood should be given the opportunity to be stimulated (both mentally and physically), play, learn and communicate. However, resources that provide information and guidance on early stimulation have not been adapted as needed. In addition, opportunities to integrate learning, play, and communication activities into different program areas have not been identified.

In Ethiopia, pre-primary education has received attention since 2011G.C. Since that time, there have been some commendable achievements. The education sector mandated that all primary schools offer the O-class program, a pre-primary program. In areas where there is no O-class or kindergarten program, a child-to-child learning program is emplaced. There is also another pre-primary education scheme, "Accelerated School Readiness Program" whereby children are able to obtain pre-primary education. Accordingly, despite quality and equitable access challenges, pre-primary enrolment has risen from 4.2% in 2012 to 45.4% in 2018/19 (ESAA, 2018/19).

In conclusion, Health, Education, and Security Services have carried out activities to increase early childhood development and education. However, due to the challenges stated above, the levels required have not been met. Therefore, multifaceted and integrated activities must be carried out to provide an environment that will promote the physical, mental, emotional, and social development of children.

PART TWO

2. Policy Framework

Revision Imperative, Basic Concepts, Vision, Mission, and Principles

2.1 Rationale for Policy Framework Revision Imperative

In Ethiopia, the National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy Framework, Strategy, and Guideline was prepared and began operationalizing in 2013G.C. The policy framework has now been revised in line with current national and global early childhood development and education guidance and the current socio-economic development in the country. The revision involved governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. It includes new policy framework issues and the role of stakeholders in implementing integrated initiatives to ensure the holistic development of children through expanding access to quality ECD services.

2.2 Basic Concepts

Ethiopia has accepted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). Both documents are duly incorporated in the Ethiopian Constitution. On the basis of the UN Convention and the African Charter, the Ethiopian government made legal revisions, developed policy frameworks, and initiated different programs which benefit children including:

a) **UN Convention on the Right of the Child (1989):** states that a child should receive the necessary protection from law, social services, and education.

b) **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2015):** state that all children have the right to healthy lives and access to quality care and pre-primary education (Goal 3, subsection 3.2, and goal 4, subsection 4.2).

c) **Agenda 2063:** states the agreement among all African countries to provide and create access to quality early childhood development and education services.

d) **The Constitution of Ethiopia (1995):** emphasizes children's rights (Article 36). And enshrines the rights of children to education, health, and social services (Article 90).

e) **The National Social Protection Policy of Ethiopia (2015):** indicates ways to address economic and social problems that affect children and thereby reduce their vulnerability.

f) **The National Children's Policy (2017):** supports the nurture and development of children and stipulates the necessary care and protection for children from social, economic, and political problems. It also specifies care, support and rehabilitation services for children in difficult situations.

g) **Education and Training Policy (1994):** indicates that pre-primary education should focus on holistic development to prepare children for formal education.

h) **The National Health Policy (2019):** gives particular attention to mothers and children.

i) **Food and Nutrition Policy (2019):** gives particular attention to improving the nutritional status of mothers and children.

j) **African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child (1990 and coming into force in 1999):** recognizes the need to take all appropriate measures to promote and protect the rights and welfare of the African Child.

2.3 Vision

Every child in Ethiopia 0 to 6 years old enjoys nurturing care and achieves their full developmental potential.

2.4 Mission

1) Provide comprehensive, integrated, quality ECDE services appropriate to the developmental stages of children and their environment to ensure holistic development.
2) Enable Children to reach their potential in a way that respects the culture and language of all children.
3) Ensure that the rights and security of all children are respected.
4) Ensure that all stakeholders provide quality services to children.

2.5 Goal

The Policy Framework provides an all-embracing framework for line ministries and stakeholders to ensure that, through effective coordination and partnership, all Ethiopian children pre-birth to 6 years get quality early childhood development and education services that promote holistic development and give every child the best start in life.

2.6 Principles

a) Priority to children's needs and safety
b) Equitable services
c) Integrated and multi-sectoral response
d) Play-centred services
e) Services that match children's interests and developmental stages
f) Participation of children, parents, and the community
g) Quality and cost-effective services
h) Protect national cultural values

2.7 Scope of Implementation

This early childhood development and education policy focuses on and serves children from pre-birth to 6 years.

PART THREE

3. Policy Framework Focus Areas and Implementation Modalities

3.1 Health, Nutrition, and Early Stimulation Services (from Pre-birth to 3+ Years)

The health sector has developed various programs that provide services for mothers and children, adolescents and youth, and food and nutrition services for all. Particular attention has been given to mothers and children, offering integrated health, food, and nutrition services for pregnant and lactating mothers and children from pre-birth to 3+ years.

To address the focus areas, health providers should provide counselling services to parents and caregivers on play, communication, and how to promote their child's development. There is a need to make health facilities child-friendly by establishing playgrounds or play corners and making play materials available. It is, therefore, necessary to work at family and society level in addition to health facility level. The following objectives and implementation modalities have been developed to address the prevailing gaps.

3.1.1. Objectives

a) Integrate quality and comprehensive early childhood development services within the community, and at facility level maternal and child health and nutrition services and within other health related programs and guarantee equitable access.

b) Provide quality nutrition services focusing on early childhood development context.

c) Support parents and caregivers to gain knowledge and awareness about early childhood development so that they are able to care for and empower their children, and are able to access and demand health services.

d) Educate the general population so that there is better societal understanding of early childhood development, more skills, and self-confidence to make decisions about child-rearing and fulfil its responsibilities.

3.1.2. Implementation Modalities

a) Capacity-building programs for health professionals will be implemented to enable them to provide quality integrated early childhood development services in maternal, child, adolescent and youth health and nutrition programs.

b) Early stimulation and responsive care services will be included in the current Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition programs.

c) The necessary budget will be allotted, and inputs will be fulfilled to make health facilities child friendly and to provide early childhood development services.

d) Awareness-creation and skill-development programs will be designed jointly with stakeholders (relevant government sectors) and carried out.

e) Developmental milestone screening services will be provided in health facilities and in home-to-home/community-based health services.

f) A referral system for child development concerns will be designed.

g) Counselling services will be provided for parents and caregivers on the importance of early childhood development so that they can promote their child's development and be linked or referred to services in other sectors as needed.

h) Activities will be identified and implemented to provide communities with awareness and skills on early childhood development.

3.2. Early Childhood Education (4–6 Years)

Early childhood education is designed for children 4 to 6 years and prepares children for primary school. The approach is play-focused with a curriculum adapted to the local situation that can be provided in and outside of school.

Early childhood education promotes the holistic development of children, (i.e., their physical, mental, social, emotional, and intellectual development) so that children develop to their full potential in all aspects including morally and spiritually. In early childhood education, children learn basic education skills (primaries on reading, writing, numerating, calculating), social skills (communication, self-expression, working together, mutual respect), emotional skills (self-control, concern for others, mutual respect), and skills to develop their body. These basic education skills are interrelated and integrated with indigenous knowledge and delivered through trained teachers in an appropriate, comfortable, and secure institution or set up.

To implement the pre-primary education program, focus will be on planning, resource allocation, curriculum design, training and assigning of teachers, facilitators and sector managers, participation of parents and the community, providing quality education, access, and equity.

3.2.1. Objectives

a) Through pre-primary education, children will be nurtured physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, ethically, and culturally so that they are ready for primary education and lifelong learning.

b) Children 4 to 6 years will have access to equitable, inclusive, and quality education adapted to the local situation with a focus on disadvantaged and underserved children.

c) Effective planning and resource mobilization to ensure adequate public financing for ECDE and emplacing equitable resource distribution system for pre-primary education.

d) A pre-primary curriculum which considers the holistic development, interests, and culture of children will be developed.

e) Pre-primary institutions will be strengthened and expanded and teachers, education administrators, caregivers, and facilitators will get the necessary education and training.

f) Higher education training for pre-primary teachers will be developed and implemented in line with the pre-primary curriculum.

g) Parents and community members will be made aware of early childhood care and education to enable them to actively participate.

h) Children with special needs will get adequate and quality education together with their peers in any pre-primary in their locality with no discrimination.

i) Pre-primary education will have a school feeding program, clean and potable water, rest rooms, and first-aid services linked with nearby health facilities.

j) Support will be given to faith-based and community-based organizations that are engaged in pre-primary education.

3.2.2. Implementation Modalities

a) Institute a three-year pre-primary education program which is free and compulsory.

b) Initiate awareness-raising/strengthening programs on the importance of early childhood education and the rights and security of children.

c) Ensure the Early Childhood Education sector allocates the necessary, separate budget for the program.

d) Establish comfortable and risk-free pre-primary schools in every neighbourhood .

e) Coordinate the efforts of the government, the community, and partners to avail quality pre-primary education in all neighbourhoods.

f) Organize standard training and on-the-job training for teachers so they are able to identify children with special needs.

g) Establish and strengthen teaching aid centres that help to identify and support children with special needs.

h) Support teacher training institutions to initiate on-the-job training programs for pre-primary teachers.

i) Prepare standards for pre-primary education and monitor and support their implementation.

j) Prepare indicators to evaluate the capacity and performance of pre-primary schools.

k) Incorporate a training framework for sign language, brail, touch tile, and other communication formats in standard pre-primary training and on-the-job training programs.

l) Develop and provide necessary teaching and learning materials, as well as teach children in their mother-tongue language.

3.2.3 Strengthen Children's Rights, Safety and Security

Those in early childhood require maximum care, safety, and security. Young children are particularly vulnerable because of their dependence on others to meet their needs and because it is a time when cognitive, social and emotional and social foundations are being made. Unfortunately, most children in Ethiopian are in difficult situations, and exposed to different types of abuses and harmful practices. Abuse has negative impacts on the physical, mental, emotional, and social development and well-being of children. One of the focus areas of the policy will be to protect the most vulnerable children by eliminating harmful practices and reducing the risk of abuse through effective protection system.

3.3.1. Objectives

a) All children will have their birth registered and be issued with a birth certificate. This will enable children to receive age-related services like vaccinations and age-appropriate education; and will protect children from harmful practices such as child marriage, child trafficking and child labour exploitation.

b) Provide quality and timely education, training, monitoring and supervision so that all those in early childhood, in all settings (including family, day care homes, childcare centres), can thrive in an environment that promotes their physical, cognitive, social and emotional development.

c) Strengthen the child protection system so that children at risk of neglect, abuse, and exploitation and those exposed to difficult situations are protected and able to access early childhood education.

d) Promote responsive caregiving and integrate education on the harms of harsh punishments and violence against young children into child protection and social protection programme work.

e) Provide legal, medical, Mental Health Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), and rehabilitation support to children who have experienced physical or emotion abuse, exploitation, or neglect.

3.3.2. Implementation Modalities

a) Integrate and carry out awareness-raising activities on the importance of birth registration and registration services within the platforms of other sectors.

b) Design and implement a skills training program for parents and caregivers to support active engagement with and support for children with special needs. Clean and safe play spaces will be provided.

c) Provide support for parents and caregivers to develop skills to ensure their own physical and mental well-being and overall stability so that they can make a positive contribution to their children and to society.

d) Improve and expand pre-primary education programs in different places and contexts and at different levels. Childcare centres that are clean, conducive, well-equipped, and safe will be made available to children in difficult situations. This program will be integrated into safety net communities

e) Children will be able to get adequate social security services.

f) support and empower parents/Caregivers to access and to demand services for young children and families in different sectors, including referring and linking them with relevant service providers.

g) Families/caregivers will be provided with social support services to keep them from falling into extreme poverty.

h) Children will be protected from abuse, harm, and exploitation. Justice and psychosocial support will be given to abused children,

i) More focus will be given to family and community-based care than institutional based care to children,

j) Integrate and institutionalize training on ECDE, particularly promotion of responsive caregiving and prevention of harsh punishment/violence against young children, into workforce development in the child protection and social protection sectors.

k) Data on child physical, mental, and sexual abuse will be included in all health and social research. Data about neglected children will also be included.

l) Peaceful and legal methods to resolve conflicts will be designed and implemented in conflict-prone areas so that the safety and security of children will be protected.

m) Gaps in the legal code which impede the protection of the rights and security of children will be redressed.

3.3 Responsive Care Giving

Parents and caregivers have the most significant impact on their children's development. During early childhood, a child's brain development is so rapid that any problem can have a long-term impact. Affection and protection from a parent or caregivers is critical for skill, confidence, and character development. Because of this, parental and caregiver awareness and skills regarding children's development must be prioritized. Many parents in Ethiopia are not adequately promoting or giving enough attention to their child's early childhood development. This is for multiple reasons, including poverty, lack of awareness, capacity and time. A lack of attention or neglect at this tender age, early childhood, results in different issues including behaviour problems, lack of self-confidence, social skills, judgement, and stability.

Therefore, the policy will focus on continuing to create conditions that increase the economic capacity of parents and caregivers as well as increasing their awareness of and skills to promote early child development and give responsive care.

3.4.1. Objectives

a) Parents/caregivers will be given awareness and skills that enable them to provide responsive care to their children.

b) Children will get responsive care from their parents/ caregivers.

3.4.2. Implementation Modalities

a) Wide-ranging awareness-raising activities will be carried out to initiate community-action on the responsive care and early childhood stimulation, involving prominent individuals and groups (such as faith-based organizations, women's organizations, social structures like '*idir',* individual role models, etc.).

b) Training on responsive care and early childhood stimulation will be included in all training programs organized at all levels for health professionals, the Women Development Army, and social services providers/social workers so that they can impart information and skills to the community.

c) Responsive care and early childhood stimulation services will be put in place for children in difficult situations and those experiencing abuse.

d) Front-line health workers, including Health Extension Workers (HEWs), will provide counselling services to parents and caregivers in health facilities and during household visits.

e) Relevant federal ministries and their regional, zonal, and woreda branches and platforms will coordinate stakeholders carrying out activities on responsive care and early childhood stimulation and will monitor implementation.

f) Well-organized and well-equipped play spaces that promote early childhood stimulation will be established in hospitals, health centers, and daycare centers. Appropriate personnel will be assigned to the institutions, and effective monitoring systems put in place.

PART FOUR

4. Implementation Framework

4.1 Strengthen Institutional Capacity

All institutions in Health, Education, Women and Social Affairs, Agriculture, and Justice sectors will receive the necessary manpower, infrastructure, technology, finance, and other inputs to strengthen institutional capacity and fulfil the policy vision and mission.

4.2 Operational Framework

Strategies, programs, and action plans will be prepared to implement the Early Childhood Development and Education. This Framework will be prepared and implemented in a coordinated and integrated manner involving all stakeholders at all levels.

4.3 Source of Finance

All sectors working on early childhood development and education will receive an adequate and reliable budget (based on the national objectives and economic situation) from government, private, and international sources. Financial resources can be administered and used jointly or independently by sector institutions in accordance with the government rules and regulations. Moreover, the community will participate in resource mobilization efforts to realize the policy framework implementation and participate in monitoring program effectiveness and efficiency.

4.4 Strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

A strong monitoring and evaluation system will be emplaced for policy effectiveness. Accordingly, sector strategic plans will have a monitoring and evaluation framework. Joint forums will be organized to facilitate the participation and operation of stakeholders.

International monitoring and evaluation indicators will be customized to the national situation and used to measure progress. Sector offices will prepare and present periodic reports on early childhood development.

Mechanisms for coordinating quality research, documenting, and replicating successful activities, will be emplaced to enhance the quality of ECDE service provision.

PART FIVE

5. Roles and Responsibilities in the Provision of ECDE Services

5.1 Stakeholder roles and responsibilities

Stakeholders will jointly manage, coordinate and implement the ECDE services and delivery plan. Accordingly, stakeholders perform the following functions:

5.1.1. Ministry of Education

a) Prepare its own ECE strategy, application guidelines, and other program implementation documents.

b) Provide training for pre-primary teachers and facilitators, prepare learning materials, and ensure standards and quality.

c) Prepare standards and curriculum for pre-primary education; Supervise formal and informal pre-primary education programs.

d) Accredit pre-primary schools and informal school readiness programs.

e) Develop parent instruction materials on early stimulation. Identify, assess, and provide early stimulation services for children with special needs.

f) Undertake a key role in capacity-building and community engagement, communication and strengthening collaboration.

g) Promote inclusive pre-primary education by exploring ways to include vulnerable children, such as children with disabilities, in early learning settings.

5.1.2. Ministry of Health

a) Prepare its own ECD strategy, application guidelines and other program implementation documents.

b) Conduct training for health professionals to build capacity and engender community mobilisation

c) Provide health services across the continuum of care to mothers, children, and the community through health sector structures, including the Health Extension Program.

d) Integrate the missing components of nurturing care into maternal and child health and nutrition programs and work with stakeholders/developmental partners to ensure service provision.

e) Ensure that integrated ECD services are provided at health posts and at home visits through Health Extension Workers in collaboration with Health Development Armies and Women Development Armies.

f) Give special focus to the provision of integrated early childhood development services for children from conception up to 3 years.

5.1.3. Ministry of Women and Social Affairs

a) Prepare its own ECD strategy, guidelines, and other program implementation documents.

b) Identify and develop existing successful parenting techniques in local cultures.

c) Educate communities about the negative effects of harmful practices on children's development.

d) Promote children's rights, protection, and care. Raise awareness about children's rights and safety.

e) Provide Children who are experiencing or who have experienced abuse with protection, support, and rehabilitation services in collaboration with stakeholders.

f) Expand support and care services for children in need.

g) Ensure that all children receive equal ECDE services according to need and without discrimination.

h) Promote the expansion of day-care centers in all government institutions and the operation of private day care centers in accordance with the ECDE standard.

i) Create child friendly recreation areas in collaboration with other stakeholders.

j) Establish community-based recreation centers.

k) Lead community mobilization efforts to promote and protect the rights of children, mothers, and women.

l) Put a system in place to prevent child labour.

m) Based on the social security policy of the vulnerable sections of the society, it will implement procedures to solve their problems.

n) Use social security policy to address issues facing the most vulnerable in society.

o) Promote high-quality childcare facilities in the workplace. Implement regulations and guidelines to ensure proper care and protection for pregnant and lactating mothers.

p) Provide rehabilitation services to vulnerable children in collaboration with other partners.

5.1.4. Parents, Caregivers and Guardians

a) Be an important part of their child's development. Their role includes creating a safe, and nurturing environment, with routines and rules enforced without harshness, within which children’s social skills and cultural, spiritual and moral values can be developed.

b) Ensure that their child's basic needs are met, including access to nutrition and health care.

c) Register their child’s birth.

d) Seek advice and support if they are concerned about their child’s development or thinks they may have a disability or special need

e) Respect and protect their child's rights, provide educational and play materials, be responsive and maintain contact with the child.

f) Participate in community level health, Education and other ECDE programs

5.2 Partner roles and responsibilities

Partners, in collaboration with sectors, and without prejudice to the procedures described in the Policy Framework, develop strategies, and perform the following tasks:

5.2.1. Community

a) Support parents and guardians to meet their child's developmental needs. Ensure that children have access to ECDE services in a safe environment with the necessary supplies.

b) Protect children's rights

c) Mobilize support to accelerate children's holistic development.

d) Provide early childhood services, targeting the needs of the most vulnerable children in the kebele or community. communicate and collaborate with other ECDE service providers.

e) Advocate for children's rights.

f) Facilitate alternative approaches that ensure access to childcare, health, and nutrition services.

5.2.2. Ministry of Finance

a) Allocate funds for the ECDE program and include it in all development plans at all levels.

b) Facilitate the mobilization of local and international organizations to support the ECDE program and provide all participating ministries with the necessary resources.

c) Actively promote collaboration between national development partners and international donors.

d) Ensure that when line ministries submit their budget requests, ECDE programs are planned and budgeted for.

5.2.3. Justice Bodies

a) Provide legal education to prevent child abuse and exploitation.

b) Close gaps in the law to protect rights and work to ensure that laws are properly enforced.

c) Ensure that children who have experienced abuse have access to justice services. Organize and disseminate information to children involved in the justice system.

d) Make legal hearing child friendly.

e) Strengthen the capacity of police, prosecutors, and judges to ensure that children's rights are properly and effectively respected.

f) Ensure that children who have experienced abuse receive rehabilitation services in collaboration with other stakeholders.

g) Increase public awareness of the importance of birth registration and improve the system.

5.2.4. Ministry of Culture and Sport

a) Identify and promote positive indigenous parenting/child-rearing techniques through the ECDE program.

b) Promote and provide the development and widespread availability of contextualized children's music and arts.

c) Promote children's library services, which can include books, toys made from local materials, art works, and children’s songs.

d) Ensure that hotels and resorts offer child-friendly services.

5.2.5. Mass Media

a) Broadcast age-appropriate early childhood radio and television programmes.

b) Raise community awareness of ECDE and increase demand for ECDE services.

c) Mobilise resources and give media attention to ECDE issues by engaging stakeholders

5.2.6. Ministry of Agriculture

a) Ensure food security through the development of various programs.

b) Provide training and counselling to parents and the community on the importance of nutrition for child development using existing structures and Agricultural Development Agents/Agriculture Extension Workers.

5.2.7. Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy

a) Ensure the availability of safe drinking water, sanitation, and energy.

b) Raise community awareness of water use and management.

c) Facilitate energy supply.

5.2.8. Ministry of Peace

a) Ensure children's safety and rights.

b) Conduct public awareness campaigns.

c) Provide safety and protection to children in difficult circumstances.

d) Collaborate with stakeholders to ensure safety of children

5.2.9. Ministry of Urban Development and Housing

a) Ensure that residential areas and buildings have safe and comfortable play spaces for children.

b) Develop and monitor construction plans for early childhood education institutions.

c) Provide technical assistance in the provision of playing equipment.

5.2.10. Higher Education, Training and Research Institutions

a) Train the necessary personnel for the ECDE service at all levels.

b) Generate evidence, research and innovation to improve the quality and accessibility of the ECDE program.

c) Establish ECDE centers of excellence.

5.2.11. Religious Institutions

a) Providing ECDE services and supporting children's development through their role in the religious life of the community

b) Build capacity, educate, promote, and mobilize resources.

c) Provide moral education for children to enhance their socio-emotional development.

5.2.12. Development Partners

a) Provide financial, material, and technical support to ECDE services.

b) Provide ECDE services in the community.

c) Build capacity and strengthen collaboration among partners.

5.2.13. Non-Governmental Civic Associations

a) Provide ECDE services.

b) Provide financial, material, and technical assistance for the implementation of the policy framework.

c) Conduct capacity-building work on ECDE.

d) Enhance the capacity of families to provide support and care for their children.

e) Generate evidence for decision making in collaboration with other stakeholders.

5.2.14. Private ECDE Service Providers

a) Provide standard-compliant play and educational materials (including for private schools, day care centers, recreation, and development centers for children).

b) Build the capacity of professionals.

c) Create child-friendly environments.

5.2.15. Private Sector

a) Establish daycare centres in workplaces for use by parents and carers.

b) Support vulnerable children in their community to ensure their holistic development.

c) Fulfil their social responsibilities by providing financial and material support to uphold the implementation of the policy framework. Also provide ECDE services, as needed.

Structure, Governance and Coordination

The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Women and Social Affairs are responsible for the overall coordination of the implementation of the ECDE Policy Framework. Based on the agreement of the three ministries, each takes turns coordinating, chairing, and performing the following responsibilities every two years:

A. Set up and chair a Steering Committee.

B. Set up and chair biannual committee meetings.

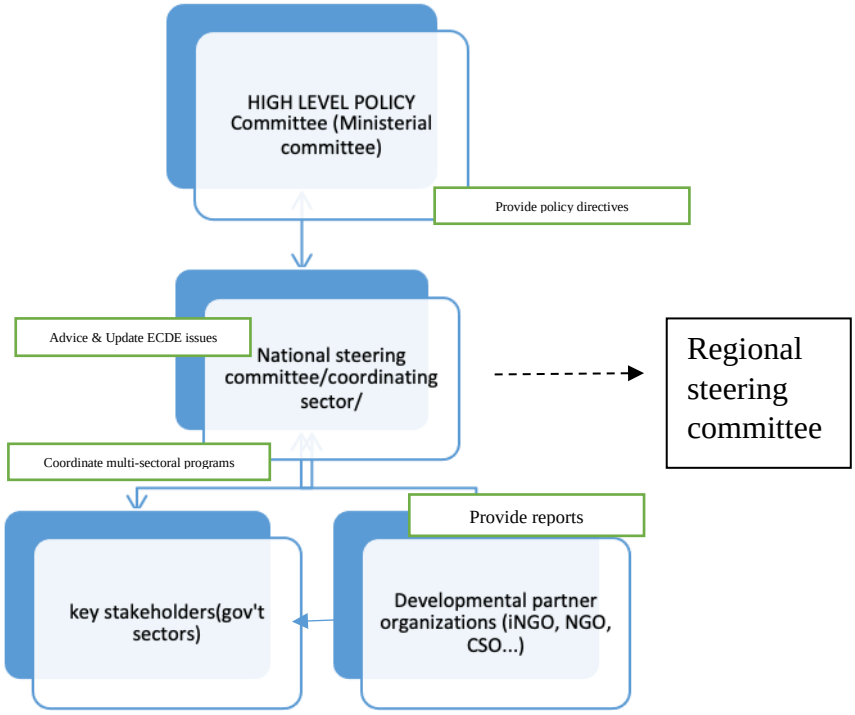
C. Arrange and maintain meeting minutes and other documents.

D. Interact with relevant organizations and manage all correspondence on behalf of the line ministries.

E. Prepare and distribute the annual ECDE report.

F. Advise and update high-level policy committees on ECDE issues on behalf of steering committee members.

Figure 1: ECDE Structure, Governance and Coordination



High-level Policy Committee/Ministerial Committee: Responsible for providing evidence-based policy directions. Members of this committee are ministers and state ministers from Health, Education, and Women and Social Affairs sectors.

National ECDE Coordinating Sector/Steering Committee Chair: Responsible for coordinating national implementation of ECDE, chairing the Steering Committee, and providing an update for the Ministerial Committee on ECDE program implementation. Every two years the mandate of coordinating and chairing is rotated around MoH, MoE and MoWSA.

National Steering Committee: Composed of members (managers) from government sectors and developmental partners who work on ECDE.

Key stakeholders/government sectors: Stakeholders and government sectors are those whose roles and responsibilities are defined in this policy framework. These stakeholders and government sectors are members of the National Steering Committee.

Development Partners: Non-governmental Organizations Involved in ECDE Whose Roles and Responsibilities are Outlined in This Policy Framework. These Development Partners are Members of the National Steering Committee.

Regional Steering Committee: Composed of key sector offices and partner organizations at the regional level.

2023

Addis Ababa